WHAT IS CLAIMED AS NEW AND DESIRED TO BE SECURED BY LETTERS PATENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS:

1. An initialization method comprising:

initializing a phase change optical recording medium with a laser beam with a power density of from 15 to 22 $mW/\mu m^2$ at a linear velocity of from 8 to 12 m/s to initialize the phase change optical recording medium, wherein the phase change optical recording medium comprises:

a transparent substrate having a guide groove on the surface thereof;

a first protective layer which is overlaid on the transparent substrate;

a recording layer which is overlaid on the first protective layer and which essentially consists of a material which is represented by the following composition formula: $Ag_\alpha X_\beta Sb_\delta Te_\varepsilon Ge_\gamma$, wherein X is at least one element selected from the group of Ga, In, Tl, Pb, Sn, Bi, Cd, Hg, Mn, Dy, Cu and Au, and α, β, δ, ε, and γ have units of atomic % and satisfy the following relationships:

when $\alpha = \beta = 0$;

$$\delta + \varepsilon + \gamma = 100;$$

$$60 \leq \delta \leq 80;$$

$$0 \leq \varepsilon \leq 30, \text{ and}$$

$$1 \leq \gamma \leq 10, \text{ and}$$

when at least one of α and β is greater than 0;

$$\alpha + \beta + \delta + \varepsilon + \gamma = 100,$$

$$5 \leq \alpha + \beta + \gamma \leq 9,$$

$0 \leq \alpha \leq 2$,

$0 \leq \beta \leq 8$,

$60 \leq \delta \leq 80$,

$0 \leq \varepsilon \leq 30$, and

$1 \leq \gamma < 9$; and

a second protective layer which is overlaid on the recording a layer; and

a reflective layer which is overlaid on the second protective layer.

2. The initialization method according to Claim 1, wherein the recording layer has a thickness of from 8 to 20 nm.

3. The initialization method according to Claim 1, wherein the phase change optical recording medium further comprises an oxide layer which comprises at least ZrO_2 and which is located in at least one of a position between the recording layer and the first protective layer and a position between the recording layer and the second protective layer.

4. The initialization method according to Claim 3, wherein the oxide layer comprises ZrO_2 as a main component.

5. The initialization method according to Claim 3, wherein the oxide layer comprises a titanium oxide.

6. The initialization method according to Claim 5,

wherein the content of the titanium oxide is not greater than 60 mole % based on a total amount of materials included in the oxide layer.

7. The initialization method according to Claim 3, wherein the oxide layer further comprises at least one of a rare earth oxide and an oxide of a group IIa element exclusive of Be.

8. The initialization method according to Claim 7, wherein a content of said at least one of the rare earth oxide and the oxide of a group IIa element exclusive of Be ranges from 1 to 10 mole % based on ZrO_2.

9. The initialization method according to Claim 3, wherein the oxide layer has a thickness of from 1 to 20 nm.

10. The initialization method according to Claim 1, wherein the irradiation is performed while the laser beam forms a spot having an area not greater than 200 μm^2 on a surface of the recording layer, and wherein a light source of the irradiation laser beam has an output power of from 0.7 to 2.5 W.

11. The initialization method according to Claim 1, wherein the linear velocity is in a range within + or -2 m/s of a crystallization limit speed of the recording layer.

12. The initialization method according to Claim 1, wherein the irradiation is performed while the laser beam forms an oval-shaped spot, wherein the following relationship is satisfied: $d/n \leq pf \leq d(n-1)/n$,

wherein pf represents a feeding pitch of the laser beam, d represents a half width diameter of the oval-shaped spot in a longitudinal direction, and n is an integer of from 2 to 5, and wherein there is no portion in the recording layer which is subject to irradiation multiple times.